

Chinese market gardening in New Zealand: exchange and interaction

James Beattie, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

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'Foreign Missions
Committee NZ Chinese (A.
Don), 1902/03, 496/31 A-
512-49 CB7/2, PCANZ

Chinese Market gardening



If you are near a town, possibly an itinerant Chinese gardener may come round to your door ... you would get vegetables more easily than you can rear them. ...

The Chinese surpass others in rearing vegetables cheaply and successfully for the market; and at the same time, set a good example to their neighbours by rising at 3 and 4 a.m.

Mrs Williams, *Migrant Guide*, 1882

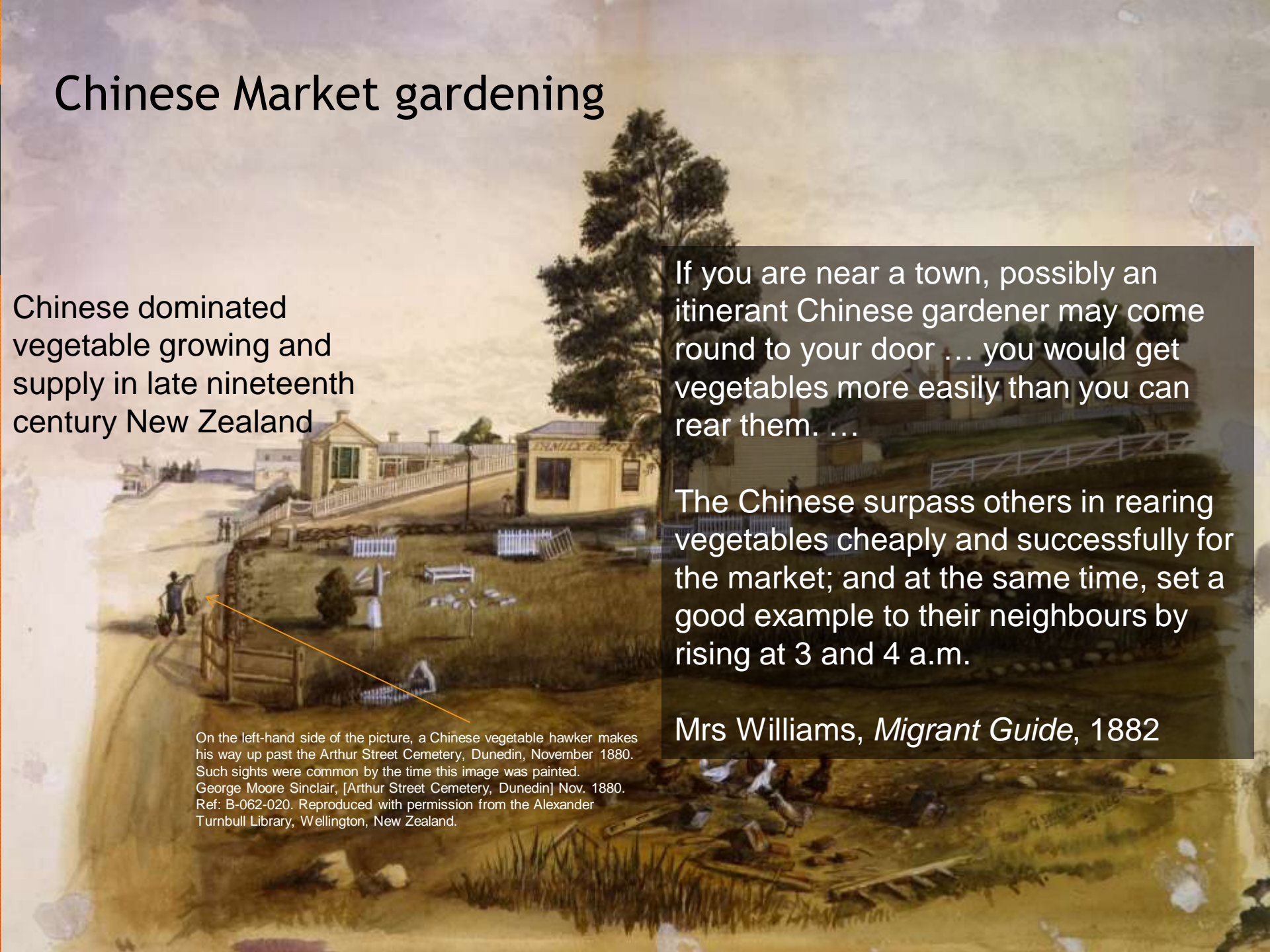
Chinese Market gardening

Chinese dominated vegetable growing and supply in late nineteenth century New Zealand

If you are near a town, possibly an itinerant Chinese gardener may come round to your door ... you would get vegetables more easily than you can rear them. ...

The Chinese surpass others in rearing vegetables cheaply and successfully for the market; and at the same time, set a good example to their neighbours by rising at 3 and 4 a.m.

Mrs Williams, *Migrant Guide*, 1882



On the left-hand side of the picture, a Chinese vegetable hawker makes his way up past the Arthur Street Cemetery, Dunedin, November 1880. Such sights were common by the time this image was painted. George Moore Sinclair, [Arthur Street Cemetery, Dunedin] Nov. 1880. Ref: B-062-020. Reproduced with permission from the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Concentrating on 19th century

4

Sons of the Soil

Chinese Market Gardening in New Zealand

黄玉平编

Victoria and Ruth Lane

The Fruits of Our Labours

Chinese Fruit Shops in New Zealand

努力的结果 新西兰华人蔬果店

Volume 1

Ruth Lane, Beverly Lowe, Helen Wong, Michael Wong and Carolyn King

JOANNA BOYLEAU
CHINESE
MARKET GARDENING
IN AUSTRALIA
AND NEW ZEALAND
Gardens of Prosperity



GARDENS AT THE FRONTIER

NEW METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON GARDEN HISTORY AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES

Edited by
James Tourassis



22 April, 2020



China's Pacific?

5



China in the Late Eighteenth Century

 Qing Empire by 1770
 Great Wall

Source: F-Armesto, *The World: A history*

22 April, 2020

Chinese migration

6



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From: Rev. W. Hewitson, Canton Village Mission. (Circa. 1916). A View Along the Pearl River in Canton, Showing Small Cargo

Boats, Houseboats, and Ferry Boats, A-S5-18.40-87, Presbyterian Archives Research Centre New Zealand.

Chinese migration

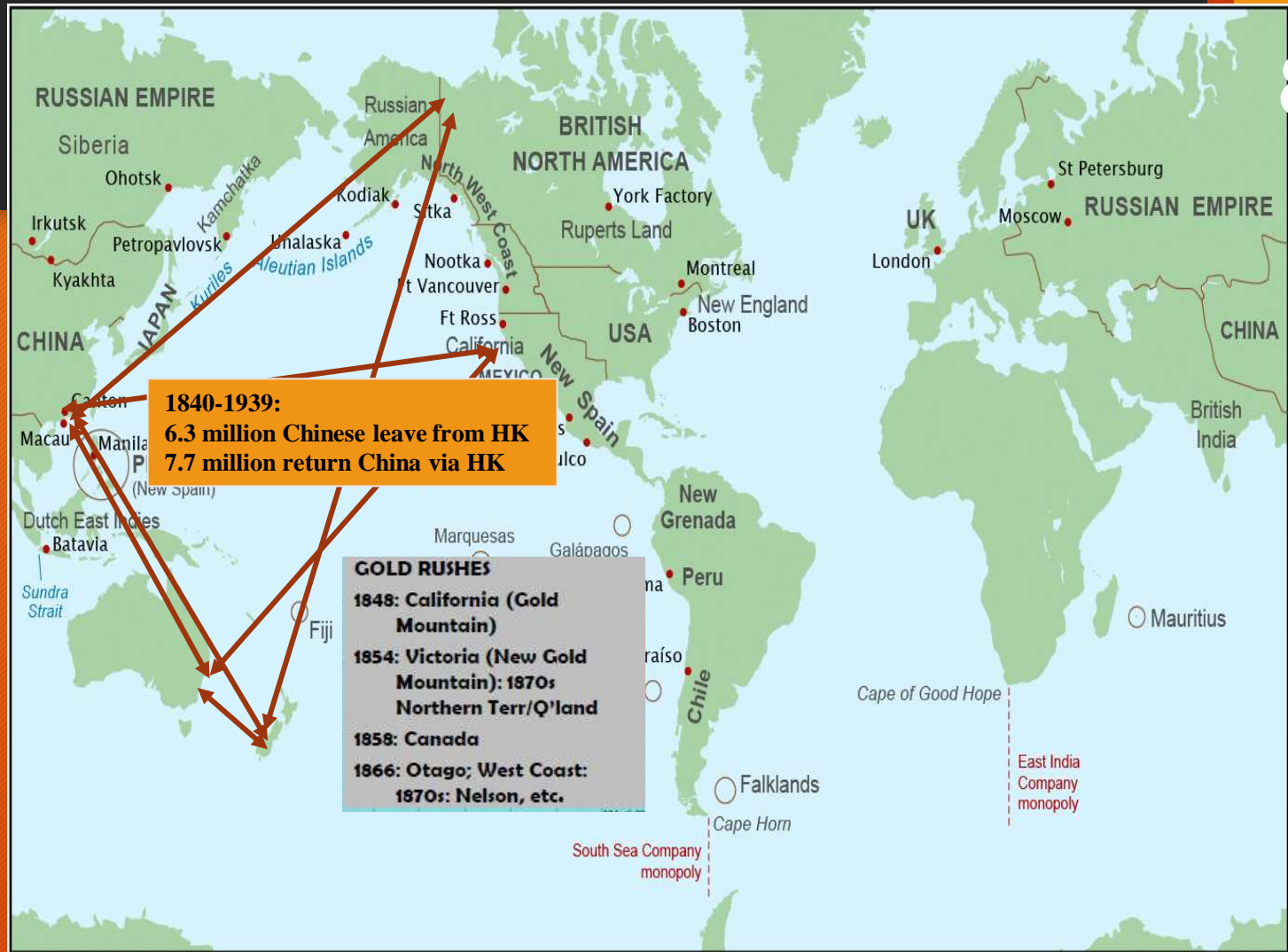
7



Victoria, Hong Kong, 1860-64

Source: http://www.pem.org/writable/resources/image/overlay_full/e81235hongkonggouache_copy1.jpg

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Otago Chamber of Commerce invites Chinese to Otago, 1865

9

W.A. Tolmie

"valuable colonists; were a well behaved class, and produced large quantities of gold and were large consumers". Sept 1865

Mr Ewan moved "urge the Executive to give an official letter or notice to the effect that the lives and property of any Chinese coming into the Province will be protected".

Source:

<https://blogs.otago.ac.nz/thehockenblog/2019/01/21/a-brief-glimpse-at-chinese-immigration-to-otago/>

22 April, 2020

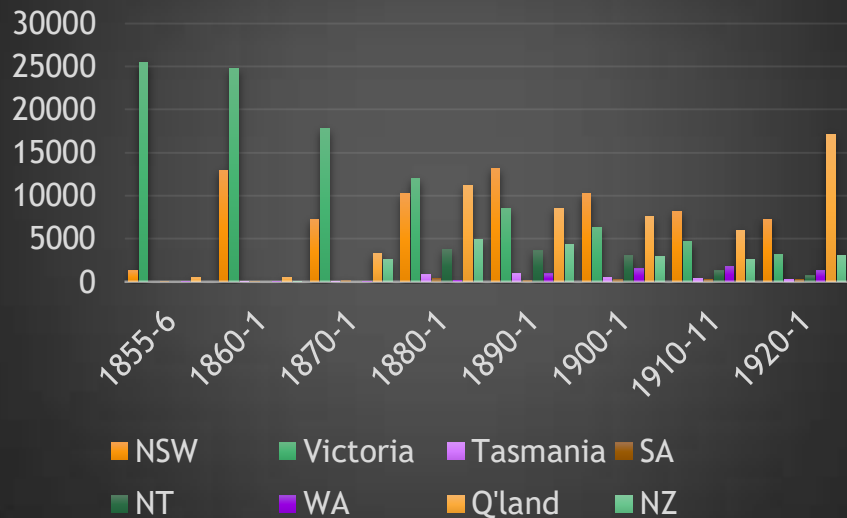
Image: O'Brien's of Lawson's designs, 1860s,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:O%27Brien_Designs_of_Lawson.jpg



Chinese migration

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Chinese population, Australasia



From: Charles A. Price, *The Great White Walls Are Built: Restrictive immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888* (Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs & Australian National University Press, 1974), p.277

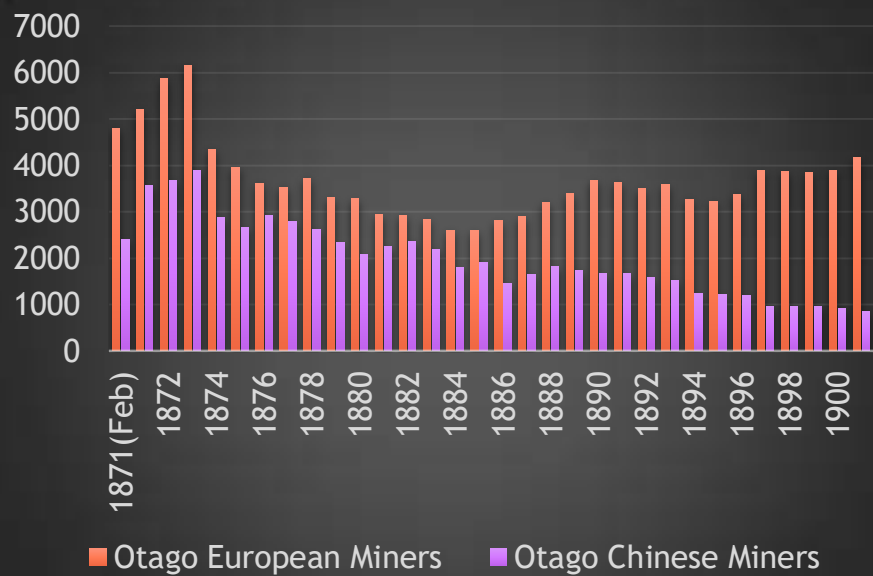


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Chinese Migration

11





Physical Presence

- Dominate certain areas
- E.g., Tuapeka: formed 25% mining population
- Naseby
- Though overall population relative to others small
- 1880/81: 5004 pop
- 1870s: c.4000 in Otago
- Then shift W Coast



Map of distribution of Chinese population in the goldmining areas in 1880/81

ADAPTED FROM TAHER, 1965, MAP 7.

Otago Gold-fields

Phases of alluvial mining

- Pan/cradle
- Sluicing (called monitors) remove soil
- Hydraulic engineering
- Dredging



Chinese gold miner, Wing Chung, with cradle on the banks of the Clutha River. Ref: 1/2-019695-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22564754>

Bendigo Gully

Chinese migration

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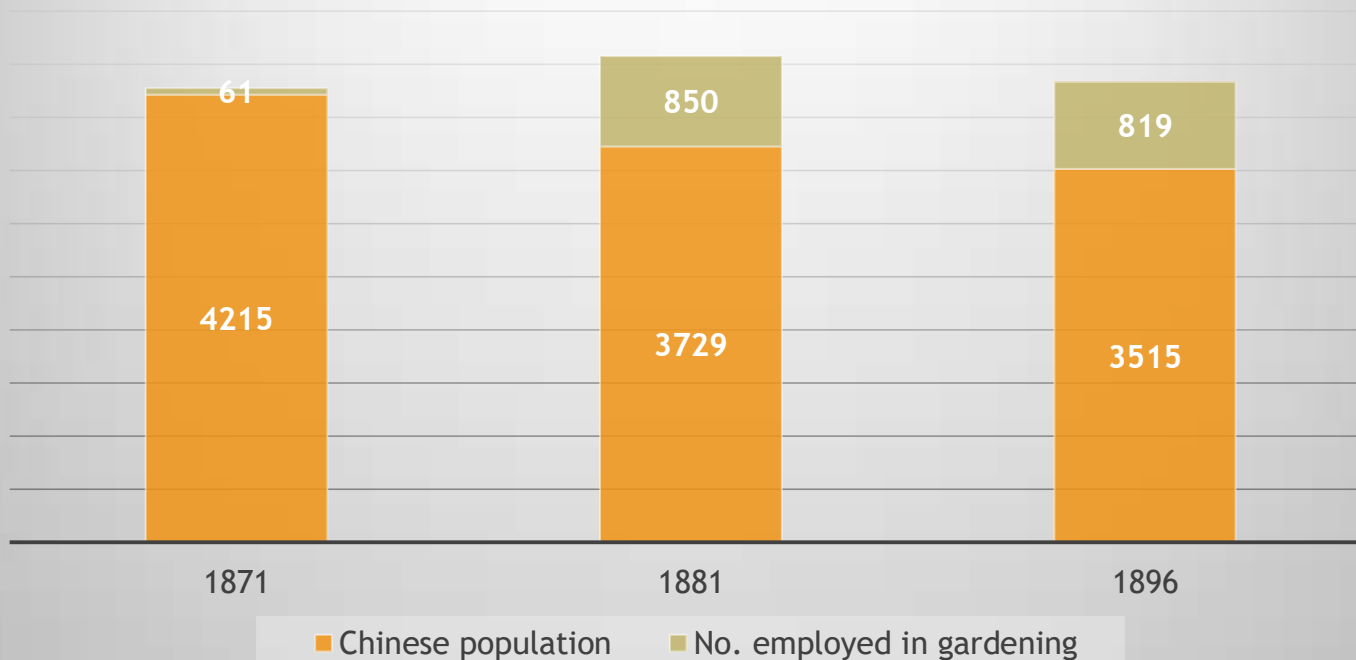


Sluicing, Bendigo Gully (Upper Clutha), c. 1898-1903.

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Chinese Gardening

Chinese employed in gardening 1871, 1881 & 1896



Almost 25%
employed in
market
gardening by
1881

Gradual decline in importance of gold-mining as easily accessible gold runs out
Shift to market gardening

Committee with Minutes of Proceedings', 1871, H-5b, 4; 1881: Presbyterian Church publication: no publisher, 1907; no page number. 'Gardening', in Matthew Hall, 'Gardening, 1860s-1900', in Matthew Hall, ed., *A History of the Garden in New Zealand* (Auckland: Viking, 1995), 94; 1896: 1896 Census information from: *New Zealand Yearbook*, 1897, <http://www.stats.govt.nz/New_Zealand_Official_Yearbooks/1897/NZOYB_1897.html> [accessed 15 May 2012]. Those listed as 'gardening' include the following categories: market gardeners and gardeners, assistants to market gardeners, greengrocers and greengrocers' assistants, and vegetable hawkers.

Chinese gardens

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Private gardens supplied Cantonese tables rather than European ones.

“‘white cabbage,’ grown of seed from China’ in Bannockburn.

Bok Choy

Chinese cabbage,

spring onions,

Chinese sugar peas

Kohlrabi

+ less commonly, coriander, white radish, chrysanthemum greens for domestic consumption.

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Source: “Chinese man and Reverend Alexander Don outside a dwelling in Waikaia.” McNeur Collection: Photographs of Chinese gold miners who worked in Otago and Southland goldfields. Ref: 1/2-019146-F, ATL

Chinese market gardens

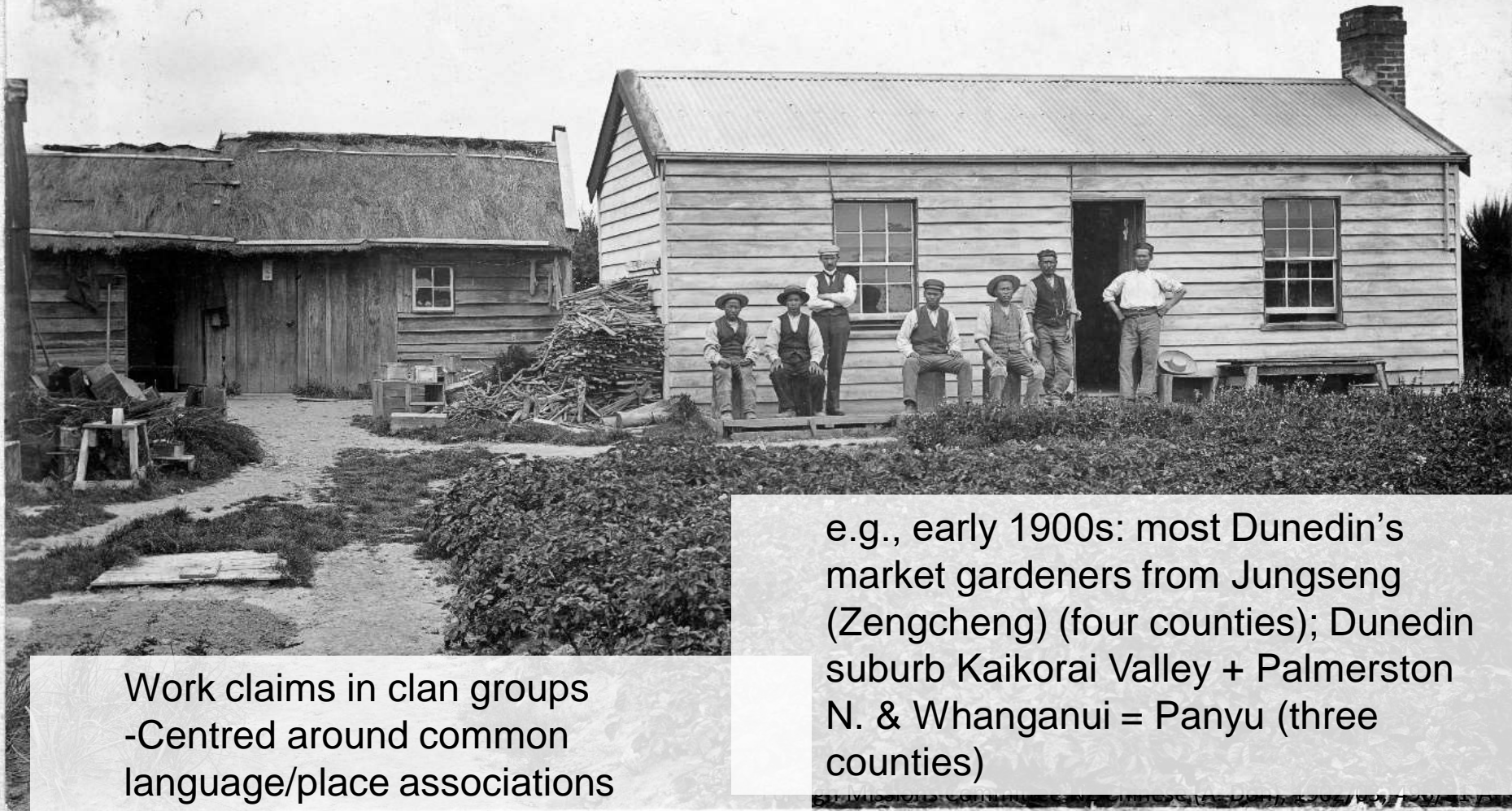
18

Dunedin market garden owned by Leong Foy grew

‘large quantities of cabbages, spinach, onions, parsnips, turnips, leeks, lettuces, radishes, peas, beans, and some red cabbages and culinary herbs...hemp and canary seed’

Otago Witness, 1 June 1878, 21

3. Market Gardening



Work claims in clan groups
-Centred around common
language/place associations

e.g., early 1900s: most Dunedin's
market gardeners from Jungseng
(Zengcheng) (four counties); Dunedin
suburb Kaikorai Valley + Palmerston
N. & Whanganui = Panyu (three
counties)

Gore Gardener's House.

*Ch'au Kwong Yim, Ch'au Shek, W.M., C. Yip, Kwong, C. Yak, Ship, Lee² & Young, C. Yuh,
L. Lam.*

20.1.1903.

512-49 CB7/2, PCANZ



Market Gardening

- Commercial
- Initially on gold-fields: e.g., here
- Later supplies major towns by 1880s-1890s

Arrowtown Chinese camp,
c.1901

from James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past...*, vol.1, p.301

Chinese gardeners/cooks/ farm workers on European farms

Otama Station, Riversdale (Southland),
employed

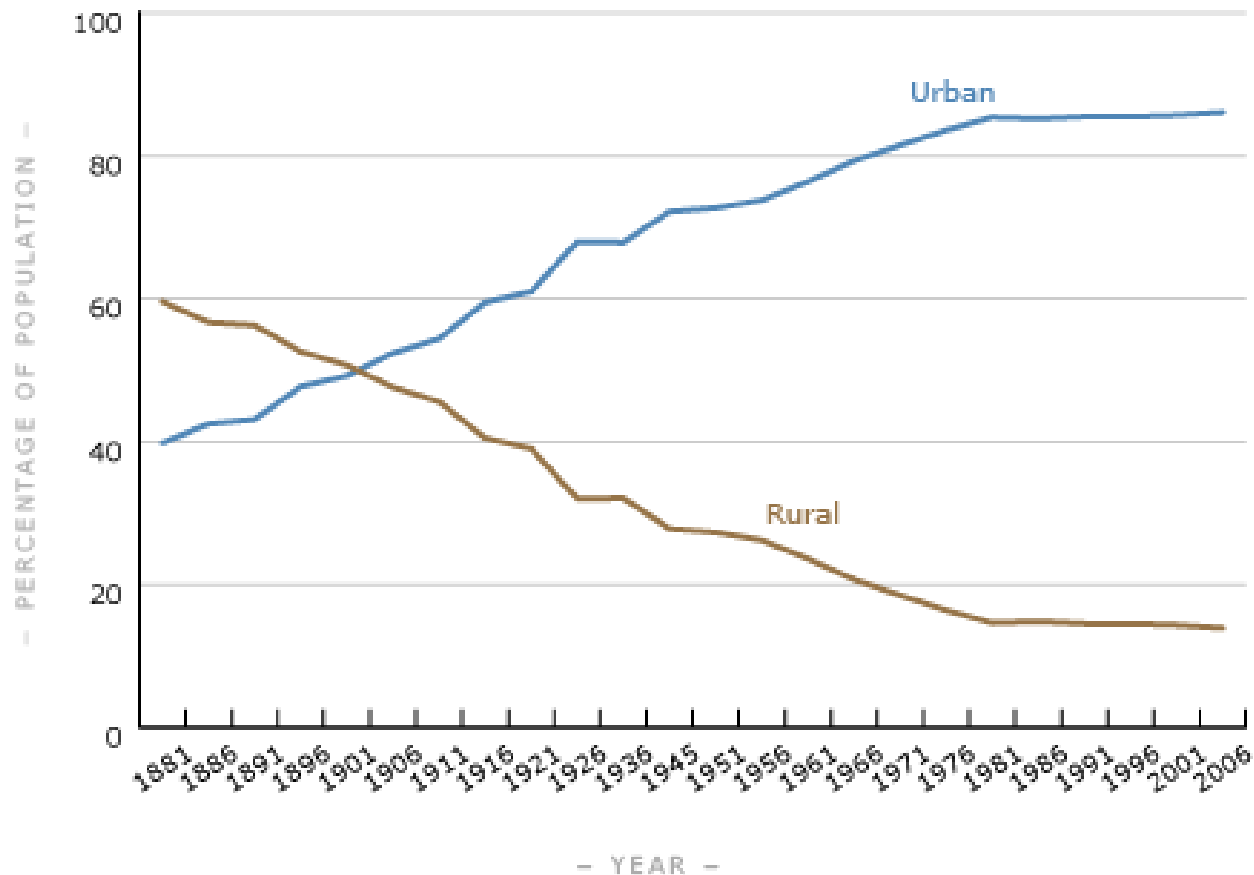
‘an experienced and
industrious Chinese gardener’ to oversee ‘the
main attraction of the grounds’.

He received praise for the variety, appearance
and abundance of the vegetables raised.

Southland Times, 25 May 1887, p. 2.

Station	No. of employees
Ayrburn	4
Birchwood	1 gardener
Ardmore	5
Greenfield	6 gardeners & others
Mt Linton (Otautau)	5
Morven	5
Kindis	5
Brookdale	5
Ashley Downs	5
Linnburn	5
Puketoi	3
Edendale	15
Kawarau	4 gardener & others
Galloway	6
Tarras	4
Mt Pisa	3
Nokomai	3
Kawarau Falls	4
<i>Source: Don's Roll, 1883-1913, courtesy Dr. James Ng</i>	

Urbanisation



David Thorns and Ben Schrader, 'City history and people - The appeal of city life', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/graph/23509/urban-growth> (accessed 17 October 2019)

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Urbanisation

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Urban + northward drift

Wellington Province's Chinese population increased:

- 474 in 1896
- 868 by 1916
- 1544 by 1921.

In 1936, 39 per cent of Chinese in New Zealand lived in Wellington Province.

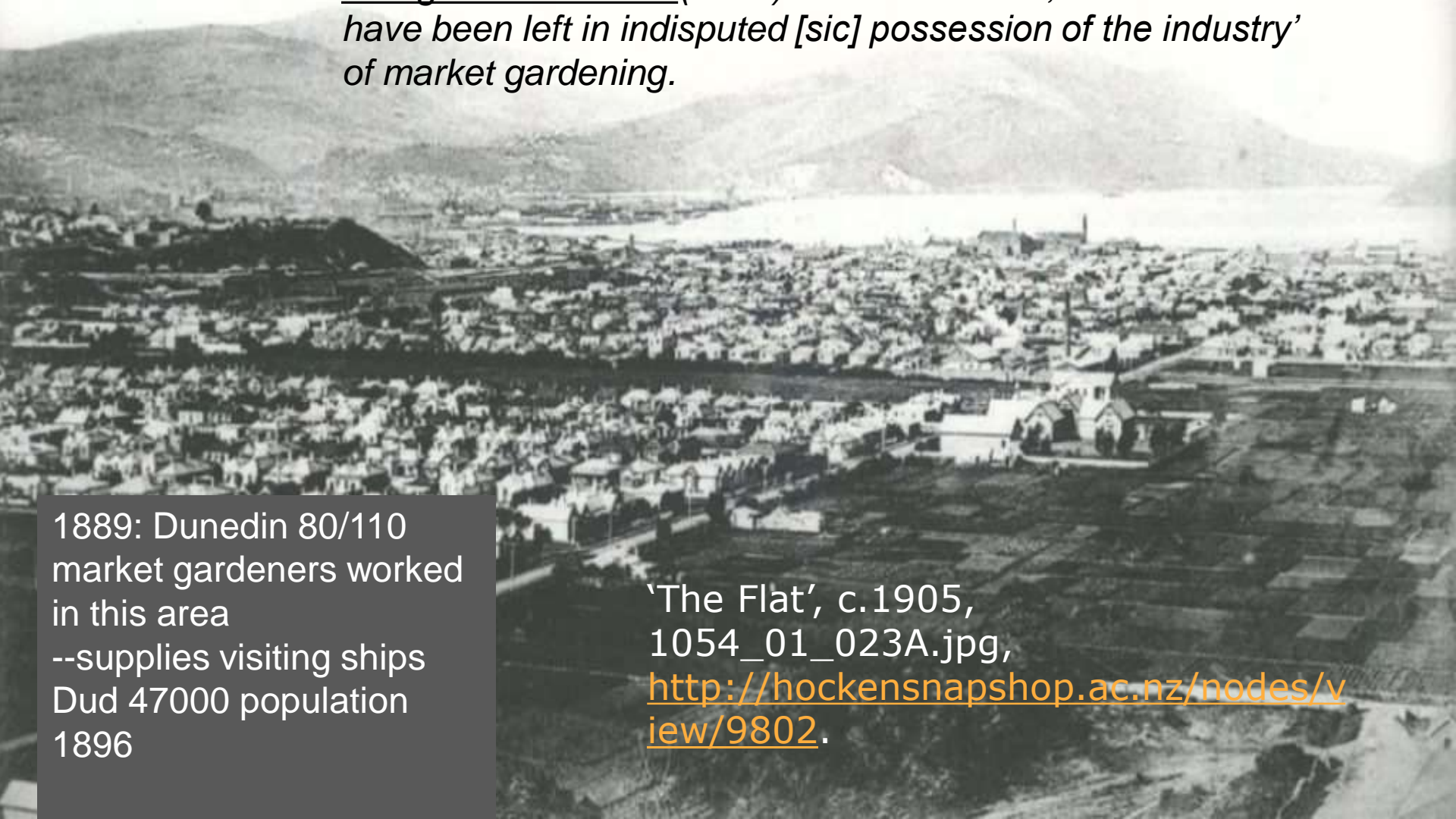
St. Kilda - Dunedin, N. Z.

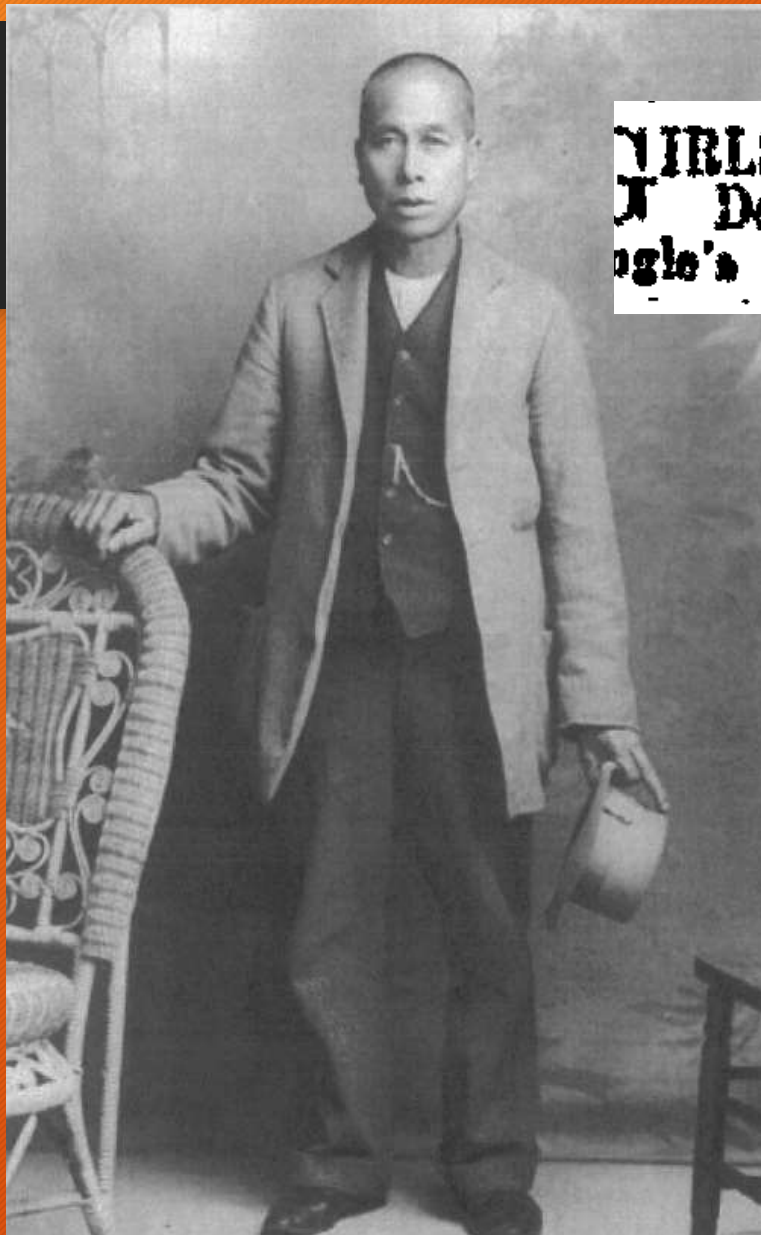
J. Duthie (1896) Wellington's citizens 'are almost solely dependent upon them for vegetables...but [for] these industrious Chinamen the people would generally go short.'

Wanganui Chronicle (1912) in New Zealand, 'The Chinese have been left in indisputed [sic] possession of the industry' of market gardening.

1889: Dunedin 80/110
market gardeners worked
in this area
--supplies visiting ships
Dud 47000 population
1896

'The Flat', c.1905,
1054_01_023A.jpg,
<http://hockensnapshop.ac.nz/nodes/view/9802>.






**GIRLS, three, wanted; 16 to 18.--B.
J Deakin, Kwong Hop Ginger Factory,
ogle's Bldgs, Rutland St.**

NZH, 6 April 1914, p.1

Chan Ah Chee

Phone 42-937.



Ah Chee & Co.

BROADWAY, NEWMARKET.
Prices to Suit Everyone.
 Choice Cauliflowers
 Choice Cabbages
 Choice Sydney Mandarins.
 Choice Queensland Pines
 Choice Navel Oranges.
 Delicious Apples, 8lb. for 2/4.
 New Shipment Fiji Bananas.

Image source: *The Journeys of Two Families*, no page



Ah Chee & Co delivery truck (c. 1920s-1930s, Mavis Lowe):

<http://www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2011/08/%E9%99%88%E8%BE%BE%E6%9E%9D-chan-dah-chee-1851-1930/>

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Joong Chew Lee, wife of Ah Chee (c. 1920s, Bruce Ah Chee): from <http://www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2011/08/%E9%99%88%E8%BE%BE%E6%9E%9D-chan-dah-chee-1851-1930/>

Chinese gardens

Canton farming total contrast
to Otago

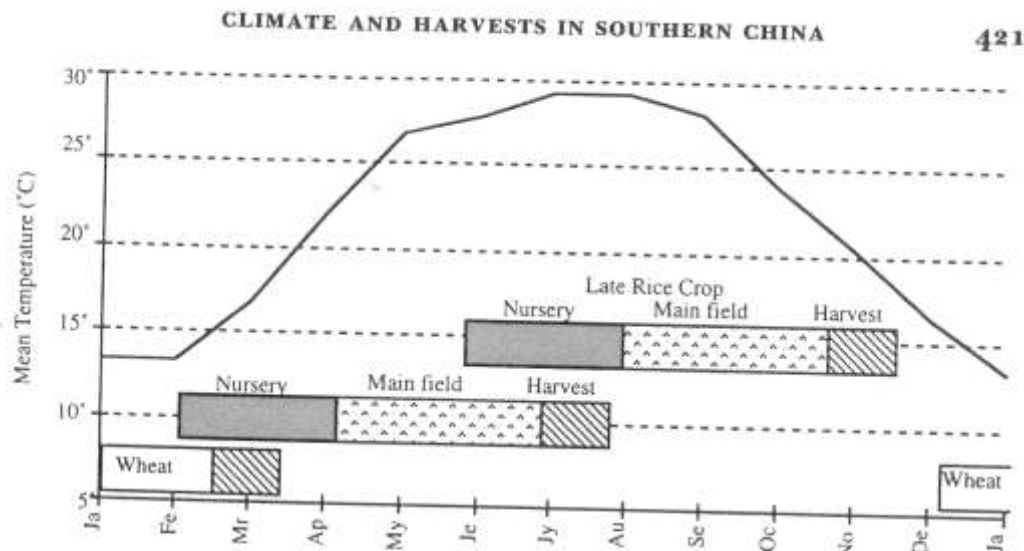


Figure 11.4. Annual cropping cycle. The temperature curve here is based upon current mean temperatures. The mean annual temperature in 1764–65 might have been about 0.3 °C lower than represented in the chart, which would shift the curve somewhat lower.

Typical Annual
crop cycle,
southern China

From: Robert B. Marks, 'Climate and Harvests in Southern China...', in *Sediments of Time*, Figure 11.4, p.421

Central Otago Landscape,
Maniototo:
<http://www.maniototo.co.nz/>

Canton's landscape

Otago's 'barrenness [contrasted] ...with the fatness of his native district.' un-named Chinese miner, 1896/7



The ploughman homeward plods his weary way' towards the compound of Kong Tsuen. In 1898 Rev. Don founded the Canton Villages Mission, servicing the Upper Panyu area from which many New Zealand Chinese came and to which many returned. Kong Chuen was the site of the mission hospital, established in 1918.

Figure 1.12 From: Foreign Missions Committee, Canton Missions Committee. (Circa. 1917). A Ploughman, Carrying his Plough, with A Buffalo in Front, Walking Along a Track Towards the Kong Tsuen Compound; The Railway Station at Rear. (photographer unknown) A L 1.25-74. Reproduced with permission from the Presbyterian Archives Research Centre New Zealand.

Why success in NZ

- Adaptation
- Some rely on existing experience in dry central Victoria
- Skilled at coaxing produce fr small areas
- Labour: work along clan lines
- Immensely hard-working
- E.g, plant out vegetables in tight rows, fertilising them with manure and other organic waste



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3. Market Gardening

The strong points in Chinese gardening, then, are constant watering and manuring and continual stirring of the soil.

This system is, no doubt, the result of a much older experience in the culture of the soil than that of Europeans, and we maintain that with all our science and so called civilisation, we have something to learn from the heathen.

Otago Witness , 1 June 1878, Page 21



Envir learning

Chinese to Eur

- Series articles 1870s on methods Eur follow fr
Chinese for horticulture

Foreign Missions Committee, Chinese (A. Dan), 1902/03, 496/11A

512-49 CB7/2, PCANZ

Gore Gardener's House.

20.1.1903.

Ch'au Kwong Yim, Ch'au Shek, W. M., C. Yip, Kwong, C. Yek, Ship, Lee² Yee, C. Yuh,
L. Lam.

Tobacco-growing - Eur/Chinese common enterprises

The Chinamen are to be commended for the perseverance they have displayed in their trial, and it is to be hoped that they will succeed in growing a marketable article. Mr Arndt is taking a considerable interest in the experiment, and assists it in every way he can.

Otago Witness, 5 July 1884, p. 7

Thurlby Domain,
Speargrass Flat, c.1880s

Image source:
Queenstown Courier,
94 (2015) p 15

Technology: Lye Bow + water races

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And a word of praise is also due to Mr Lye Bow... Mr Bow is a straight-out enthusiast in fruit culture... *Otago Witness*, 28 May 1896

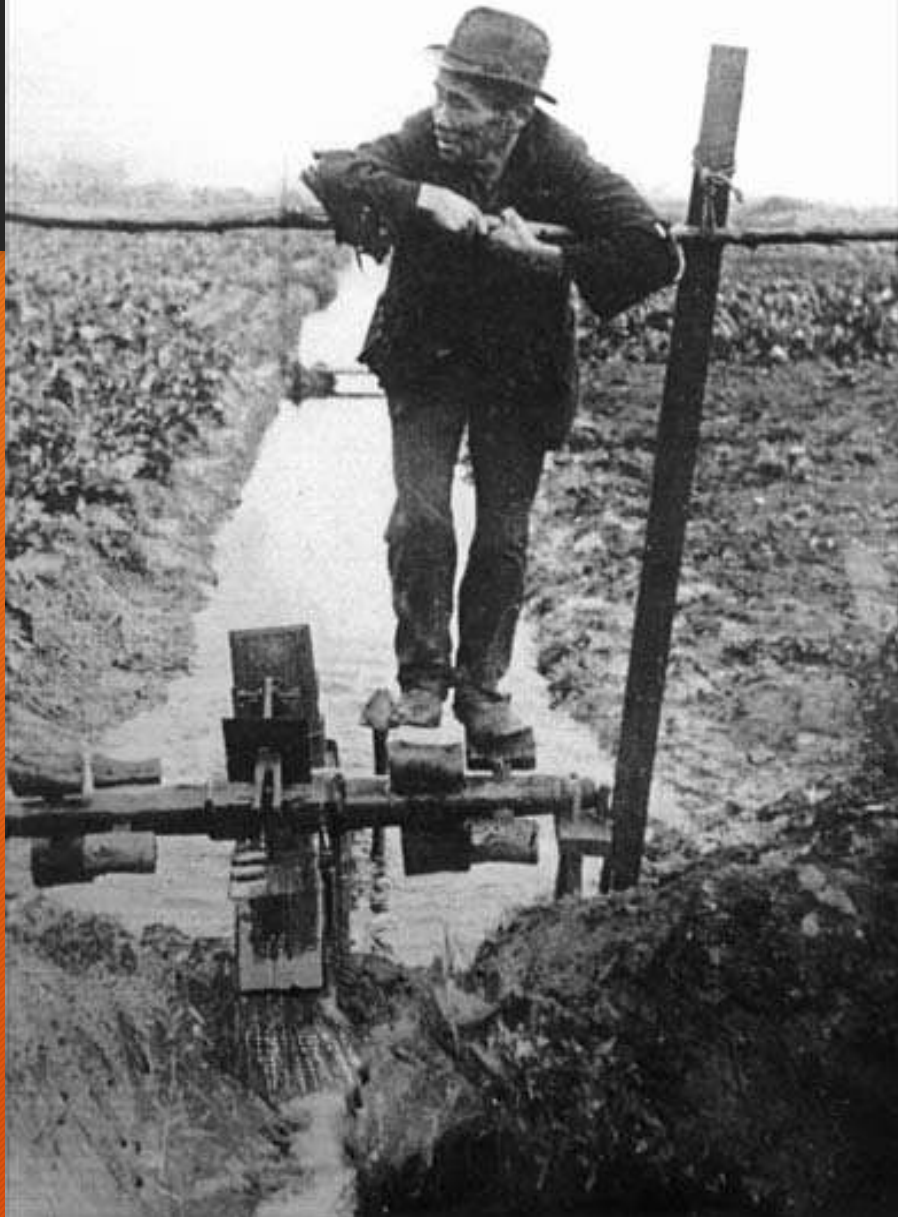
This orchard contains a thousand apple trees, two thousand apricot, two hundred peach, and two hundred greengage plum trees, besides several hundred pear trees of many varieties. *ODT*, 14 Nov 1903

22 April, 2020

Lye Bow (Lye Dong Boa) seated in cart: Source: J Ng

Background image:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/flyingkiwigi/20129238322>

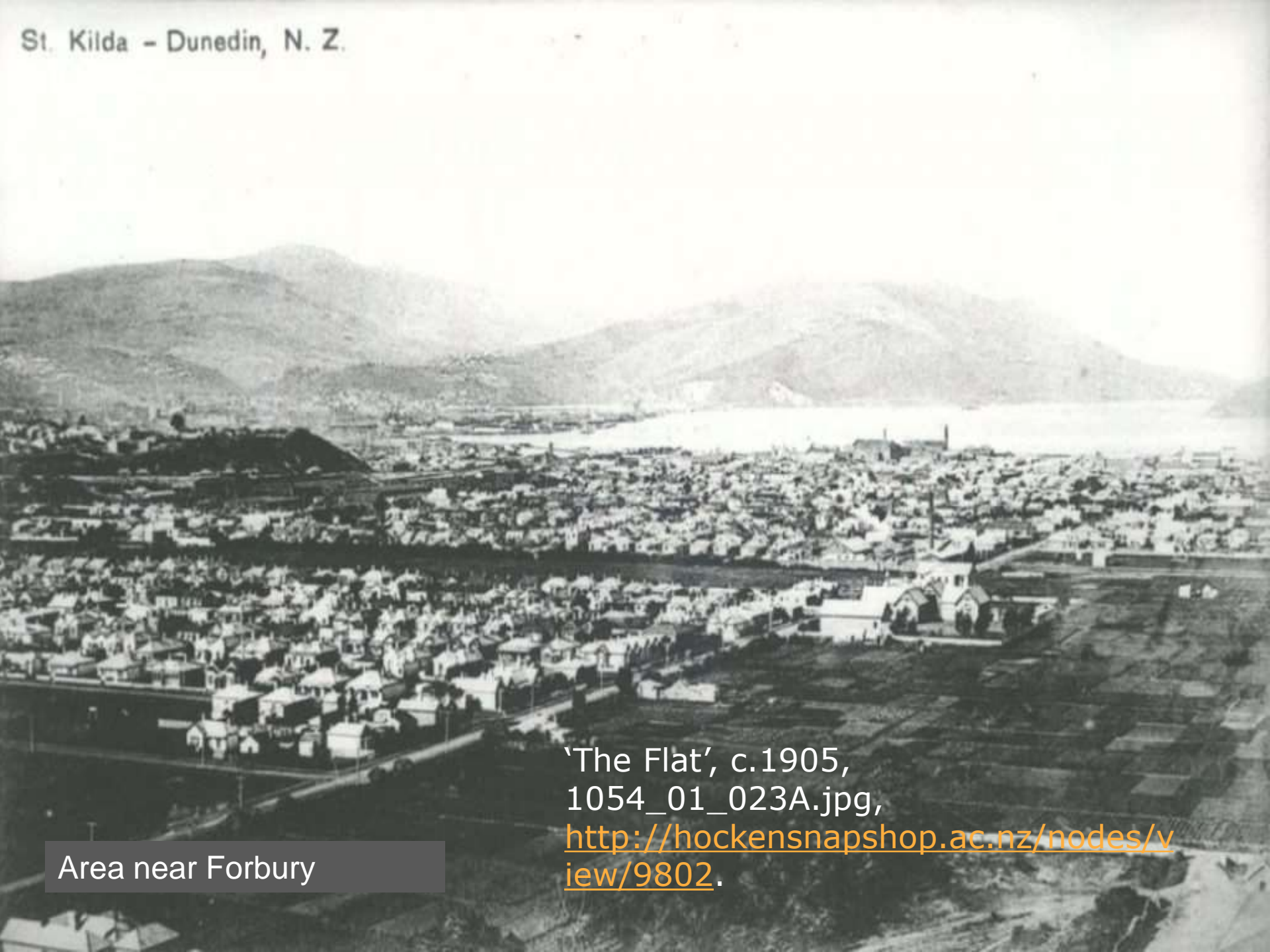


‘The Chinese on the low-lying Forbury market-gardens are applying the machine that in China they use to raise the water from streams up to their ricefields, here to raise the water off their gardens into the street open drains to run off’.

Alexander Don, *Diary*, 1899-1907, item 413, in Ng, v1, note 77b, 167

Unnamed Chinese market gardener, Forbury, Dunedin, operating pedal waterwheel. Date unknown. ‘Activity on the school grounds in the early days,’ King’s High School, Dunedin, neg E6778/4, Hocken Library. Reproduced with Permission of Hocken Library and King’s High School. With thanks also to James Ng and Lin Phelan.

St. Kilda - Dunedin, N. Z.



'The Flat', c.1905,
1054_01_023A.jpg,
<http://hockensnapshop.ac.nz/nodes/view/9802>.

Area near Forbury

Sixth]

Te Aro Seed Co's

[Edition

GARDEN GUIDE

— PRACTICAL HINTS ON —

What to Sow - When to Sow - How to Sow
For the Vegetable and Flower Garden



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Company,
1899/1900-1956

James Chin/Moon Ting
(Jung Seng, born 1859-
1956)

GARDEN ANNUAL

1931

SEEDS • BULBS & PLANTS

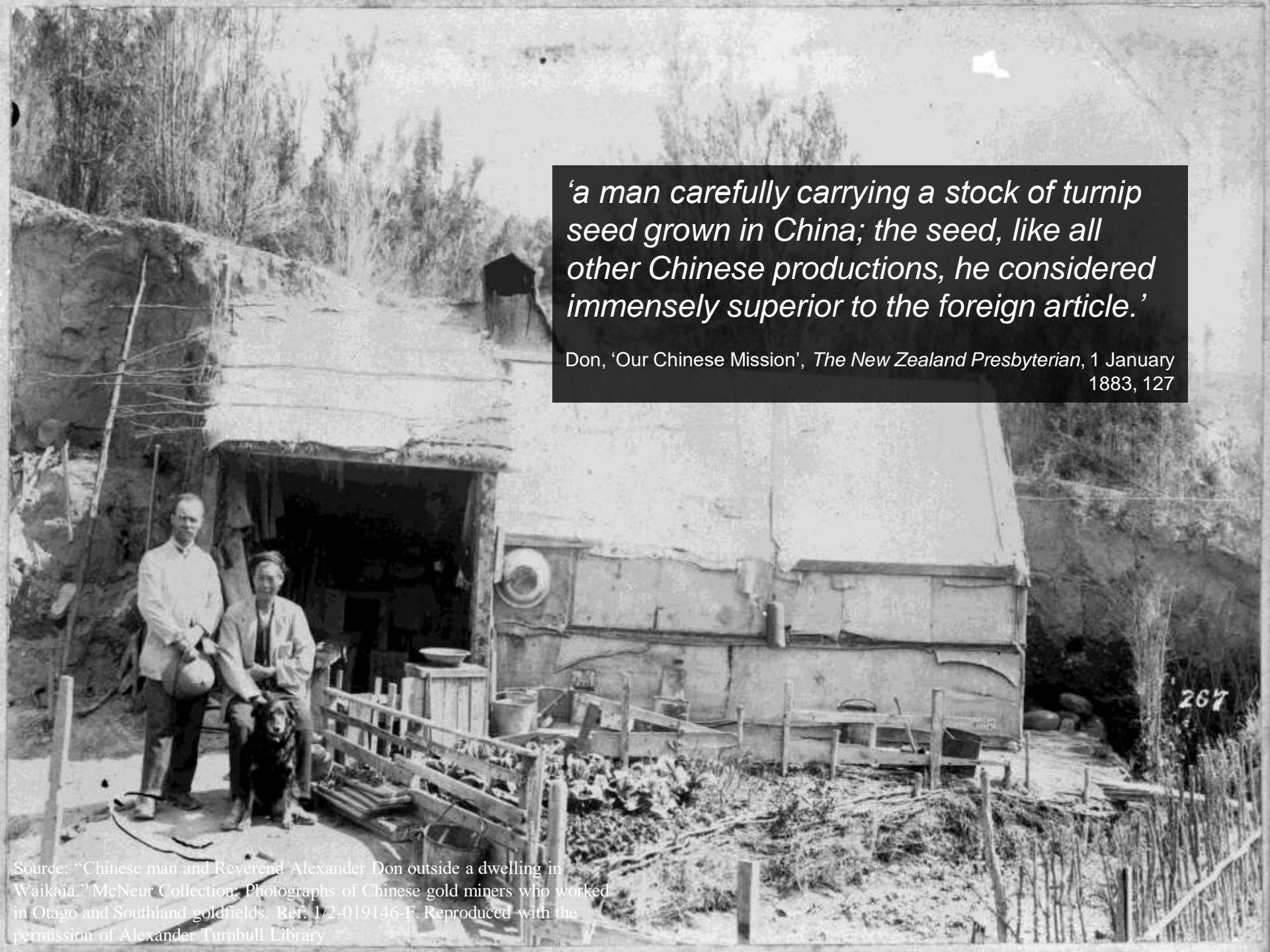


THE ARO SEED CO.

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G.P.O. BOX 320

TELEPHONE 21-465



'a man carefully carrying a stock of turnip seed grown in China; the seed, like all other Chinese productions, he considered immensely superior to the foreign article.'

Don, 'Our Chinese Mission', *The New Zealand Presbyterian*, 1 January 1883, 127

Source: "Chinese man and Reverend Alexander Don outside a dwelling in Waikato." McNeur Collection: Photographs of Chinese gold miners who worked in Otago and Southland goldfields. Ref. 1/2-019146-F. Reproduced with the permission of Alexander Turnbull Library

Flower competitions

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- Chinese entered & won European horticultural competitions
- Some also members Dunedin Horticultural Society by 1900s



e.g., March 1871, Dunedin market gardener Wong Koo, won a special 'prize for his exhibits of lilies and feather ornaments'.

'Chinese Narcissus' could be *Narcissus tazetta* var. *chinensis* (Chinese Sacred Lily or daffodil).

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Flower competitions

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Plant exchanges



1891: Chinese supplied to Dunedin plant nursery, Nimmo & Blair, result of friendship between Nimmo & local Chinese?

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Materia medica

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Most medicine imported,
but occasionally some
made from local plants

‘A man to-day showed me a bottle containing “medicine for bruises and falls;” he made it from a berry growing at Round Hill [Southland] which he called “seven star berry,” soaked in samshoo [sic., a strong liquor made from fermented rice]’

Alexander Don, ‘Our Chinese Mission’, *The New Zealand Presbyterian*, 1 February 1884, 147

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Materia medica

Ostensibly acupuncture book, but deals with materia medica

Alexandra, Central Otago
Belonged to
Kwong Dungwa (?) 徐堯新
(Xu Yaixin, pinyin)



Growing racism

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- E.g., some Chinese employed Eur and Mri
- Owhiro Valley (Wellington) Europeans dig, and transport 'manure to their garden.'
 - Growing racism 1880s: e.g., 1881 poll tax
 - Focus on market gardening as examples of unfair competition of Chinese + health fears

Growing racism

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Chinese market gardens 'centres of fever and death-dealing miasma' (*Wanganui Herald*, 25 August 1897, p. 3)

1920s: fears of miscegenation between Māori & Chinese
(driven by Māori [Young Maori Party] + some Europeans)

But often compromises

Authorities defend health fears

e.g., doctors 'affirmed that the Chinese cannot make the plants they raise become the agents of disease by using any ordinary or known manure.' *Wanganui Herald*, 25 August 1897, p. 3

Wellington's Medical Officer of Health pronounced its yards to contain 'no offensive accumulations or deposits. The conditions found did not justify any action being taken under the city's health bylaws.' *Evening Post*, 26 January 1923, p. 4.

Growing racism

45

Bylaws prohibit mrkt gardening activities; complaints over smell

- 1923, Wellington's City Council's proposed
- 'bylaw banishing market gardens from the ... city'
- Chinese protest
- Compromise reached
- Chinese use stable manure in winter, & artificial fertilisers in summer.

Bylaws

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20thC: modern sanitary city

--growing bylaws banning animals in cities

--expansion of cities uses up land

Market gardens move out of towns; using trucks



Ah Chee & Co delivery truck (c. 1920s-1930s, Mavis Lowe):

<http://www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2011/08/%E9%99%88%E8%BE%BE%E6%9E%9D-chan-dah-chee-1851-1930/>

Chan Ah Chee

Phone 42-937.



Ah Chee & Co.

BROADWAY, NEWMARKET.
Prices to Suit Everyone,
 Choice Cauliflowers
 Choice Cabbages
 Choice Sydney Mandarins,
 Choice Queensland Pines
 Choice Navel Oranges,
 Delicious Apples, 8lb. for 2/4.
 Now Shipment Fiji Bananas.

Joong Chew Lee, wife of Ah Chee (c. 1920s, Bruce Ah Chee): from <http://www.environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2011/08/%E9%99%88%E8%BE%BE%E6%9E%9D-chan-dah-chee-1851-1930/>

Cantonese reaction to Otago landscape

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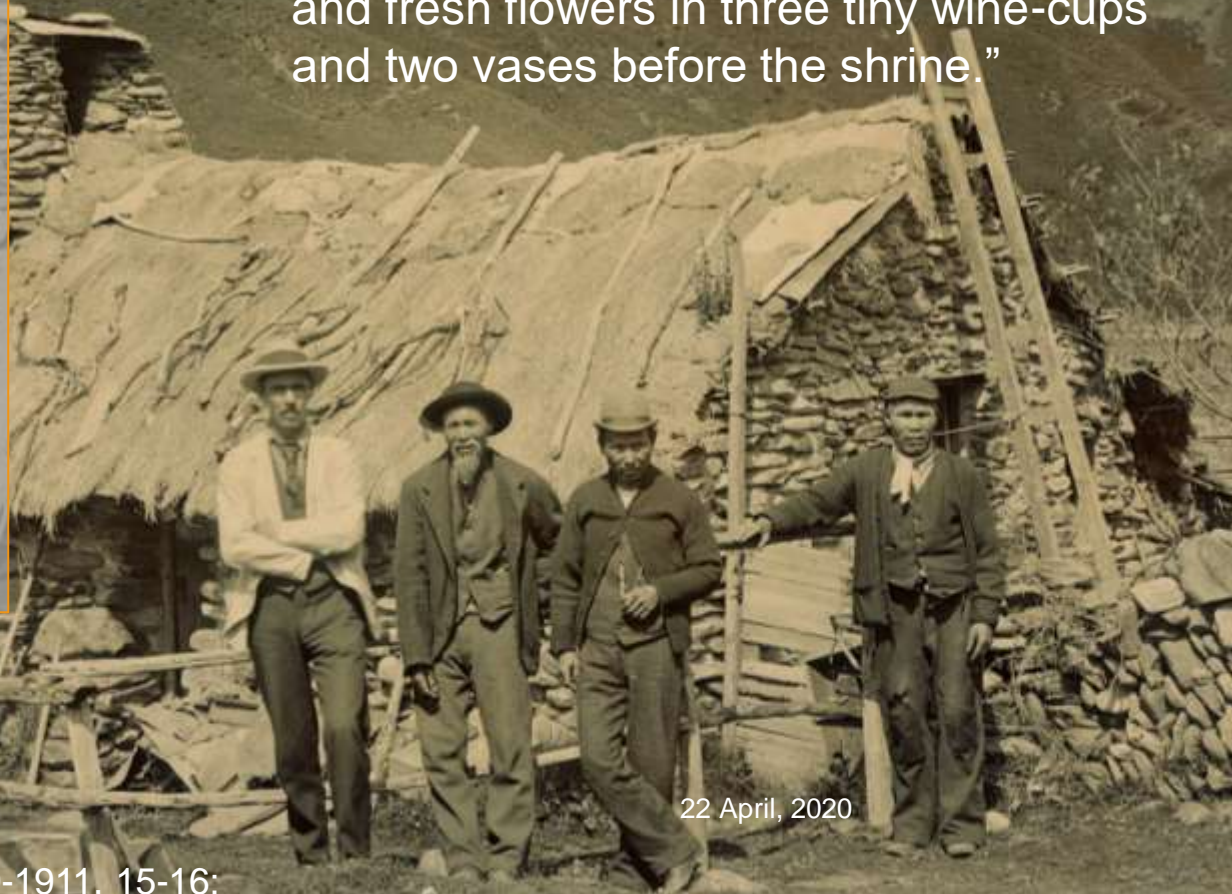
“Top: Heroic and Majestic
Official

Centre: Venerable Sire
ch'an Sui Tsing [sic].
Imperially appointed
Preserver of The Empire
and Protector of the People.

Right side: Spiritual Virtues
Strong as the Hills.

Left side: Springs of Wealth
Deep as the Ocean.”

“The owner had placed offerings of wine
and fresh flowers in three tiny wine-cups
and two vases before the shrine.”



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Rites

Gore's eight Chinese gardeners devoted a shrine

'to the memory of' their ancestral chief, "Tranquil."

Don, *New Zealand Presbyterian Chinese Mission: Inland Tours XXIII and XXIV, 1909-1911, and Westland Tour, 1911* (Dunedin: Otago Daily Times, 1911), 30-31.



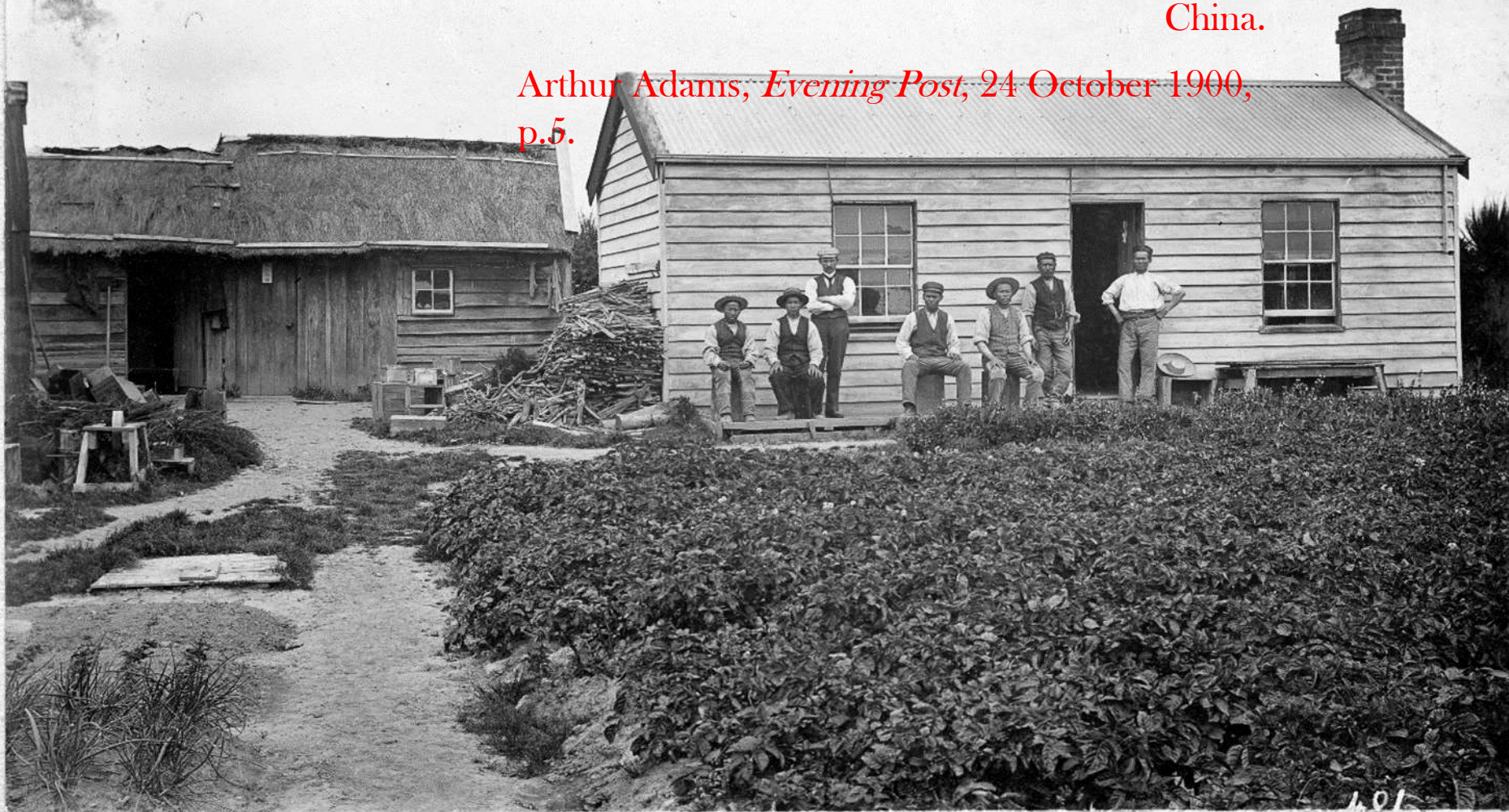
Gore gardeners' House .

20.1.1903.

Ch'au Kwong Yim, Ch'au Shek, W.M., C. Yip, Kwong, C. Yate, Ship, Lee² E. Yung, C. Yung, L. Lam.

Take one of the Chinese gardens in the
outskirts of any of the New Zealand cities,
multiply it a million-fold, and the result is
China.

Arthur Adams, *Evening Post*, 24 October 1900,
p.5.



Gore Gardener's House.

20.1.1903.

Ch'au Kwong Yim, Ch'au Shek, W.M., C. Yip, Kwong, C. Yate, Ship, Lee² & Yung, C. Yung
L. Lam.

Translation

51



‘Matai’ [Ma Tai?] and W. Paterson,
date unknown, c.1900?, from Ng,
Windows v2, p.

‘They prepared passages from the Bible in Chinese characters & beneath this there were Chinese words written in ordinary letters [i.e., phonetically in English?] & beneath this again there was a literal translation. Thus a Chinaman & an Englishman could each read & pronounce the Chinese words & see what each Chinese word meant in English’

WGC Paterson, ‘Walter Paterson, 1827-1917’,
handwritten MS, OSM, 1976.

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Conclusion

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Places of friendship and understanding yet also
enmity and misunderstanding

Significant sites of cultural contact

Thank you very much

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Further questions: james.beattie@vuw.ac.nz

Thank you:

AGHS and its organising committee, Dr. James Ng, Dr. Joanna Boileau, Duncan M. Campbell, Dr. Paul Star, Chris Elder, Prof. Peter Holland, Dr. Joseph Lawson, Prof. Liu Ts'ui-jung, Prof. Robert B. Marks, Lynette Shum, Dr. Selia Jinhua Tan, and the staff of the Presbyterian Archives Aotearoa, Hocken Library, Rachel Carson Center, LMU

Cantonese naming in Otago

Fraser River	“Big Stone Ditch”
Naseby	“Hogburn”
Potter’s	“Tailings”
Adam’s Gully	“Coal Gully”. ...
Shepherd’s	“Shaap-a-shee:
Drybread	“Turn-po-leet”
Nevis	“Neewut”
Cromwell	“Khumlum-po”
Glenore:	“Woo-lo-shoot” – woolshed
Macetown	“Ah-lah-shup-yee mai”
Arrow	“Twelve Mile”
Teviot	“Tee-putt”

From: Don, *Nineteenth Inland Otago Tour, 1905-1906*
(Dunedin: Otago Daily Times, 1906), p.4

Bay Road, South Riverton. N. Z. 101. A. J. F.

Cantonese reaction to Otago landscape

“owing to the arrangement of the hills and rivers about Riverton our fung-shui is good.” (1882)

“Here [at Cromwell] the great river is at my door with high hills beyond and around. I would rather be here without the £30.” (1908)

“Though my body is in China, my heart is in the Gold Hills.” (1908)

“the increasing mildness of the Southland climate [is due] to the presence of Chinese in the country”